WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

 A method of preventing damage to the terminal of a hermetic compressor having a motor, said method comprising the steps of: sensing current draw through the terminal;

sensing current draw through the terminal;
monitoring a signal representing the sensed current draw;
comparing the monitored signal to a reference signal
corresponding to a current draw substantially greater than a current
draw associated with a locked rotor condition of the motor; and

rapidly disconnecting power to the terminal when the monitored signal exceeds the reference signal to prevent heating of the compressor terminal to a level likely to cause terminal venting.

- The method of claim 1 wherein the reference signal corresponds to a current draw greater than twice the current draw associated with a locked rotor condition of the motor.
- 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the reference signal corresponds to current draw that will subsequently heat the terminal to a level that the differential temperature between a pin and surrounding glass of the terminal exceeds a level where stresses in the glass will cause failure of the pin/glass seal.
- The method of claim 1 wherein the current draw is sensed externally of the compressor.
- 5. A method of preventing damage to the terminal of a hermetic compressor having a motor, said method comprising the steps of:

 sensing power draw through the terminal;

 monitoring a signal representing the sensed power draw;

 comparing the monitored signal to a reference signal

 corresponding to a power draw substantially greater than the power draw associated with a locked rotor condition of the motor; and

 rapidly disconnecting power to the compressor terminal when the monitored signal exceeds the reference signal to prevent heating of the compressor terminal to a level likely to cause terminal venting.

- The method of claim 5 wherein the reference signal corresponds to a
 power draw greater than twice the power draw associated with a locked rotor condition
 of the motor.
- 7. The method of claim 5 wherein the reference signal corresponds to power draw that will subsequently heat the terminal to a level that the differential temperature between a pin and surrounding glass of the terminal exceeds a level where stresses in the glass will cause failure of the pin/glass seal.
- The method of claim 5 wherein the power draw is sensed externally of the compressor.
- 9. A hermetic compressor having a hermetically encased motor, a terminal assembly and a compressor fault interruption circuit, said fault interruption circuit comprising:
 - a current draw sensor;
- a reference signal source representing a current draw threshold level that is much higher than locked rotor current;
- a comparison circuit connected to receive inputs from said current draw sensor and said reference signal source; and
- a disconnect device connected in series with and ahead of said terminal assembly and controlled by said comparison circuit.
- 10. A fault interruption circuit for disconnecting power to a compressor terminal under very high current conditions to prevent damage to the terminal, the circuit including:
- a current sensing circuit disposed externally of said compressor for sensing input current provided to the terminal by a power source and outputting a sensed signal representing said current; and
- a control circuit including a first circuit for outputting a reference signal representing input current higher than locked rotor current, a second circuit connected to the current sensing circuit and the first circuit for comparing the sensed signal to the reference signal, and a third circuit connected to the second circuit for externally disconnecting power to the terminal when the sensed signal exceeds the reference signal.

- 11. The circuit of claim 10 wherein the current sensing circuit includes a current sensor coupled to a line carrying power from the power source to the terminal, and a rectifier connected to the current sensor for converting an output from the current sensor into a DC voltage proportional to the sensed signal.
- 12. The circuit of claim 10 further including a regulator circuit connected to the power source, the regulator circuit including a regulator connected to the control circuit for outputting a DC voltage, the first circuit including a voltage divider network having an input connected to the regulator, the voltage divider network producing the reference signal from the DC voltage output of the regulator.
- 13. The circuit of claim 10 wherein the second circuit includes a comparator having a first input connected to the current sensing circuit output for receiving the sensed signal, a second input connected to the first circuit of the control circuit for receiving the reference signal, and an output for outputting a first signal when the sensed signal exceeds the reference signal.